

UN's most basic purposes, it was quickly recognized that it would be necessary to further elaborate these fundamental freedoms in order to ensure their protection. The resulting document—the Universal Declaration of Human Rights—has since served as the foundation upon which all other human rights work at the international level has stood. It remains to this day an enduring guide for human rights advocates around the globe.

This has been an exciting and dramatic year that will be remembered for the triumphs of the Arab Spring. The fall of so many dictators who have been responsible for the deaths, torture, and other atrocities meted out against so many has opened up the exhilarating prospect of real reform and meaningful human rights improvements. But the final chapter of the Arab Spring has not yet been written, and nothing can be taken for granted.

Progress in this field is not necessarily linear. As Ronald Reagan said in his inaugural address, "Freedom is a fragile thing and is never more than one generation away from extinction."

I believe it is especially critical, at this historic moment, for the United States to remain vigilant in the protection and promotion of human rights—abroad and at home.

Overseas, the United States must continue to use our voice to speak on behalf of those silenced by brutal regimes. We must continue to lift up those who cannot stand on their own. And while we must inevitably pursue a multifaceted foreign-policy that advances American goals in a broad range of areas including hard security and the economy, we must never treat human rights as something expendable.

I take particular note of the countries that stand shoulder to shoulder with us in that effort. I welcome Polish Foreign Minister Radek Sikorski's call for a "European endowment for democracy," similar to the National Endowment for Democracy which the United States has supported since 1983. I commend Poland for the leadership it has shown on human rights issues during its presidency of the European Union.

In all of these efforts, the role of civil society remains critical. On the 50th anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the United Nations adopted a declaration on the rights of human rights defenders. They are the first line of defense and they often pay the highest price.

There are, unfortunately, too many cases of human rights defenders who are imprisoned, persecuted or worse, for me to raise them all here. But I would like to mention one in particular that maybe emblematic of many others: the case of Evgenii Zhovtis, Kazakhstan's most well-known human rights activist.

Zhovtis is the Director of the Kazakhstan International Bureau for Human Rights and Rule of Law and even a member of the OSCE Office for

Democratic Institutions and Human Rights' panel of experts on freedom of assembly. But he was involved in a tragic car accident in which a pedestrian was killed and, after a trial widely condemned for lacking due process, he was sentenced in 2009 to 4 years in prison.

A year ago, at the OSCE Summit in Astana, civil society activists called for Zhovtis' release. As one NGO participant remarked:

Evgenii is the human rights Everyman. If this can happen to him, it can happen to anyone.

A year later, Evgenii Zhovtis remains in a Siberian penal colony, even as Kazakhstan prepares to host an OSCE election observation mission. In the spirit of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, I once again urge President Nazarbayev to review his case and to release him.

Thank you.

TRIBUTE TO JOAN MCKINNEY

Ms. LANDRIEU. Madam President, I rise today to pay tribute to Joan McKinney, who has been a beloved and respected mainstay of the Senate Press Gallery for almost 40 years.

Joan retired recently after a decade of service on the Press Gallery staff. Prior to that, she served the people of my home State of Louisiana for 2½ decades as Washington correspondent for the Baton Rouge Advocate.

Joan is originally from Greenville, SC, and is a graduate of Winthrop College. She came to Washington in 1971 to work on the press staff of our dear colleague Senator Fritz Hollings.

As her career advanced, she chose to return to journalism, working first as a reporter for the Greenville News, where her father served as editor, and then for another paper from my home state, the Shreveport Journal.

Joan was hired away by the Advocate when she continually beat the Advocate's reporter—who happened to be the son of the publisher—on stories. I came to know and respect Joan during our many hallway meetings that so often occur between Members and the press. I also had the great fortune of getting to know her as a person and as a friend.

In her tenure as the Advocate's congressional correspondent, Joan came to be well respected by members of the Louisiana delegation from both parties. The Members from my State knew her as fair-handed and tough, and most of all, that there was nothing, nothing that could get by her.

Through her work, Joan became an expert on the intricacies of the Senate and the Supreme Court. She took this knowledge with her into her role as a member of the Senate daily press gallery staff. I know her Senate acumen on the institution and its procedure was of great value to the reporters roaming the gallery who relied on her for deep insight about the Chamber they cover.

Joan, who has won reporting awards from the South Carolina and Louisiana press associations, is a longtime member of the elite Gridiron Club of newspaper writers. She was one of the first women to become a member.

I know that one of Joan's biggest interests is dance, something I am told she plans to be very active with in retirement. Long before "American Idol" and "So You Think You Can Dance," Joan was an excellent competitive dancer. Her specialty is Shag, a regional dance popular in the Carolinas.

This year, Joan won her first national Shag championship. With more time to practice, I am sure more dance titles are on the way.

For those of us who have been fortunate to work with Joan, it is almost impossible to imagine the Press Gallery without her. But I know I join the entire Senate press corps in wishing Joan the best as she embarks on this new adventure in her life.

Joan, thank you for sharing with this institution and our entire country your knowledge, experience and good heart. All of us are better as a result of your service to the best ideals of our democracy.

CROWDFUNDING

Mr. MERKLEY. Mr. President, I rise today to address a promising new idea for investors and small businesses: crowdfunding.

In recent years, small businesses and startup companies have struggled to raise capital. The traditional methods of raising capital have become increasingly out of reach for many startups and small businesses. There is another option, but Congress must act to authorize it and provide for appropriate safeguards.

Low-dollar investments from ordinary Americans may help fill the void, providing a new avenue of funding to the small businesses that are the engine of job creation. The CROWDFUND Act would provide startup companies and other small businesses with a new way to raise capital from ordinary investors in a more transparent and regulated marketplace.

The promise of crowdfunding is that investments in small amounts, made through transparent online forums, can allow the "wisdom of the crowd" to provide funding for small, innovative companies. It allows ordinary Americans to get in on the ground floor of the next big idea. It is American entrepreneurship at its best, which is why it has the support of the President and many in the business community.

That said, there are real risks of investment losses at a rate far beyond ordinary investing. Crowdfunding, if done without proper oversight, provides significant opportunity for fraud. Indeed, it was not too long ago that our financial regulators were doing daily battle with scam artists pitching huge returns on fraudulent schemes through small, unregistered securities.